

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of the claims replaces all prior versions and listing of the claims in the present application.

Listing of Claims

1. (currently amended) Hydrocarbon exploration system, comprising:

a first vessel (1) having a turret (3) around which the vessel can weathervane, the turret being moored to the sea bed, and

a second vessel (7, 8) connected with at least one riser (12) to a subsea well (5, 6),

the first vessel being connected to the second vessel via a fluid transfer duct (20, 21) comprising a first end section (23) attached to the turret (3) of the first vessel (1), a substantially horizontal mid section (24), and a second end section (22) attached at or near the second vessel (7, 8),

the fluid transfer duct extending at a depth between 30m and 300 m below water level, and comprising a central buoyancy tank (64), a frame (63) attached to the tank carrying a number of flow lines (60,61) and a power supply cable (39,40), an anchor line (31) connecting the central buoyancy tank to the sea bed,

wherein the second vessel (7, 8) has no large hydrocarbon storage facilities and a hull weight of between 2,000 and 15,000 tons and comprises an upper structure (13) and a submerged base (15) to which second vessel (7,8)) the riser (12) is connected,

the base (15) being attached to the sea bed via taut tendons (9, 10), the weight exerted by the fluid transfer duct (20, 21) on the second vessel (7, 8) being below 1,000 ton, a power generator (35) being situated on the first vessel (1),

wherein power is transferred from the power generator (35) via an electrical swivel (38) on the first vessel, to [[a]] the power supply cable, the power supply cable (39, 40) extending along the flow lines (60, 61) ~~fluid transfer duct (20, 21)~~ from the first vessel (1) to the second vessel (7, 8), and being supported at least partly by the frame (63) ~~fluid transfer duct (20, 21)~~, and

wherein at least one further said vessel (7, 8), of similar type as the second vessel (7, 8), is attached to the first vessel (1) via a respective said fluid transfer duct (20, 21) ~~in a similar manner as the second vessel (7, 8).~~

2. (canceled)

3. (previously presented) Hydrocarbon exploration system according to claim 1, wherein the second vessel (7, 8) has a central part (16) and at least three transverse mooring arms (17, 18, 19), radially extending from the central part (16).

4. (previously presented) Hydrocarbon exploration system according to claim 1, further comprising an anchor line (30, 31, 32, 33) extending from the sea bed (4) to the second end section (22) of the horizontal mid section (24), at an angle to the vertical.

5. (previously presented) Hydrocarbon exploration system

according to claim 1, wherein buoyancy elements (55, 56) are placed locally along the horizontal mid section of the transfer duct (45), the horizontal section extending along a curved trajectory.

6. (original) Hydrocarbon exploration system according to claim 4, wherein a buoyancy member (26, 27) is attached to the first end section (23) of the fluid transfer duct (20, 21), a second anchor line (31, 33) being attached to the seabed (4) and the first end section (23) at an angle with the vertical.

7. (original) Hydrocarbon exploration structure according to claim 3, the end part of the fluid transfer duct being attached to a vertical arm (17, 18, 19).

8-14. (canceled)

15. (previously presented) Hydrocarbon exploration system according to claim 3 further comprising an anchor line (30, 31, 32, 33) extending from the sea bed (4) to the second end section (22) of the horizontal mid section (24), at an angle to the vertical.

16-20. (canceled)